1977

Midwest China Oral History Interviews

Elizabeth Hughes

ELIZABETH HUGHES

ORAL HISTORY ABSTRACT

BORN: November 18, 1919, in Coulston, England.

EARLY LIFE: education; serves with Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) in Europe and Mid-East, 1944-45; leaves for China to work with FAU, 1945.

CHINA EXPERIENCES: evaluates preparation for work in China; adjustments to life in China; stationed at Kutsing Hospital, Honan; evaluation of health problems, availability of medical supplies and health care in post-WWII China; assigned to Medical Team 19 (MT 19); stationed at International Peace Hospital, Yenan, 1946; response to various foreigners encountered during time in China; general description of Yenan area and the spirit of Yenan's inhabitants; contacts with the leadership of Yenan; anti-Kuomintang and American sentiment in Yenan; land reform in Yenan; coping with pregnancy in Yenan; adapting to shortage of medical supplies in Yenan; the Chinese perspective on nursing as a profession; greatest satisfaction from work in China; experiences with traditional Chinese medicine; general description of Chinese co-workers; rest and relaxation in China; impact and value of the China experience; leaves China, 1948; describes experiences to British Broadcasting Company in producing public information about People's Republic of China.

INTERVIEWER: Margaret Stanley

DATE: 5-31-77

PLACE: Burlington, Ontario

NUMBER OF PAGES: 82

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: Elizabeth, shall we start out with a few questions which will have brief answers. Then as we go on we'll want more explanation and one thing will lead on to another. I'm delighted we have this chance to talk after how many years? It has been 30 years since our work together in China and at least 10 since we've seen each other. So this is an historical occasion. I will ask some rather formal questions first. We need to establish a background for our conversation. First, I'll ask when and where you were born.

HUGHES: I was born in Coulston, Surrey, on the 18th of November, 1919. Coulston is about 20 miles from London.

I: And something of your family background?

HUGHES: We were a middle class family. I went to a free-paying school with my sisters. I left school when I was 17, having matriculated. Two years later when the war started in Europe, I trained as a nurse at a teaching hospital in Birmingham.

I: It was sometime after that, that we met in China. What was the background of the circumstances which took you to China?

HUGHES: I had finished training as a nurse during the war. This was 1944 when the war was still in full progress. I joined the Friends Ambulance Unit to go to the Middle East and Europe. I worked there with relief teams, mostly in

Palestine and Egypt looking after refugees from continental Europe. They were mostly Yugoslav refugees. Later, I went to Italy and looked after displaced persons in Rome. Then I went to Rhodes, which had been in the hands of the Germans until the end of the European war, and went to look after the starving population there.

While I was in Rhodes, my husband (he was my fiance then) was asked if he would go to China to carry on relief work because the Asian war was still on. It was arranged that we should get married and go there together. That's how I came to go to China. My husband was asked to form Red Cross emergency first aid teams that would go right up to the front line. By the time we got to China, the Japanese war had finished and these teams were not needed, so other work was found for us.

I: How did your work in the Middle East and Europe compare with what you later found in China?

HUGHES: When we worked in the Middle East and Europe, we were always supplied by the military, who had pretty well complete control of the area in which we operated. Our activities were directed, supported and/or restricted by the military authorities. But we were able to draw supplies from the army--everything from food, fuel and stoves to bedding and medical supplies. In China, though we were

able to get some supplies from organizations such as UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association), we were visitors in an alien land with its own government. We usually had to buy everything we needed in the open market--or, in Communist China, managed with what could be supplied to us by the authorities.

I: What date are we talking about when you arrived in China?

HUGHES: This was August, 1945. That was the end of the war, when my husband was asked to go to China. We had to go to China by England. We were in England for three months before we could arrange transport. We went by boat to Bombay, across India by train, and we flew from Calcutta to Kunming in South China, arriving the first week in January in 1946.

I: January, 1946--that was a month or two before I arrived. What did you know of the conditions in China before you arrived?

HUGHES: Very little, but we realized that the Chinese had been at war with the Japanese a great deal longer than England had been at war with Germany. So we expected conditions to be very much affected by the war.

I: From a 30-years perspective after, on China, can you say something about the perceptions you might have had before the China experience; whether or not you were able to accomplish what you set out to accomplish?

HUGHES: I feel we weren't able to make a very great contribution because we knew we were going to China for a limited period only. Our contract was for two years, though we stayed three. Consequently, we didn't have the incentive to persevere with the difficult language which would have made a very, very great difference. Work was assigned to us, but in every case we could have made more of an impression if we had spoken Chinese.

I: How prepared did you find yourself for the work in China?

HUGHES: My previous experience had helped me with the general setup in the way we were expected to work. While we were in Nationalist China, the work in many ways was similar to work we had done in the Middle East. Once we got into Communist China, of course, we weren't responsible for the areas in which we could work, our supplies, where our patients should come from, and what food we should eat. We had very little responsibility. We just had to do the best we could with what was offered to us. It was not until we were in China, however, that I fully realized that the civil war between the Nationalists and Communists, who had both been fighting the Japanese, was still dividing the country.

I: You mention being in Nationalist China and you mention being in Communist China. Had you anticipated ahead of time being behind lines of both factions?

HUGHES: Until we got there, I don't think that we were aware that China was two nations. As I said, it wasn't until we were in China that we realized that the Nationalists and the Communists, who had both been fighting the Japanese, were not uniting but fighting each other.

I: As far as leaving home and going as far away as China on the other side of the world, did you encounter negative reactions?

HUGHES: None at all.

I: Can you tell us something about your arrival in China, your initial assignment and adjustments?

HUGHES: In other places, such as Egypt and Palestine, where the British Army had been, there were always notices in English and the English were always considered people of importance. I can remember standing in Kunming and not seeing a single word in writing that I could understand. I thought how terribly, terribly dirty and dusty everything was and how I should never be clean again. I felt thoroughly bewildered. Nevertheless, this soon passed.

I: Did you find that adjustments were necessary in your personal and professional life?

HUGHES: Professionally, certainly. I had been used to living in fairly primitive conditions in the refugee camps, and so on. Also we had had four years of wartime England where there had been a good deal of austerity, restrictions, privations, and danger.

I: By contrast, I had come from a different background--from a country the war did not touch and from a city university hospital. In comparison with you, I certainly felt that I didn't have the experience and background of making the adjustments to the kind of conditions we found ourselves in. They were indeed primitive.

HUGHES: Oh yes, in the north, certainly.

I: Primitive, because we did such things as boil our surgical instruments over the cooking stove, an open fire.

HUGHES: Oh yes. Of course, the war had set everything back so in England so that even in the best hospitals we were still boiling the instruments in 1944. Probably in America you had autoclaves.

I: We would have sent to the Central Supply Room and it would have come down on the elevator.

HUGHES: That's it, yes. Well, it was much nearer to the work that I had been doing. We had no gamma-ray, sterilized, throw-away syringes or anything like that.

I: Yes, I remember how much I had to learn and later regretting I didn't learn more. But it certainly was a learning experience. Can you briefly describe the health conditions as you saw them in China? You arrived in West China and I think you went very soon to Honan Province.

HUGHES: We worked there in West China for some months. In West China I worked in a small hospital in Kutsing which the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) had run for several years. There was an operating theatre and several well-qualified Chinese members of staff, and the hospital ran smoothly. In Chengchow I worked in the operating theatre of a busy hospital, part of a large mission compound which had been abandoned to the Japanese. The FAU had reopened the hospital, and we did about 100 operations a month, 40 of which were major surgery. We removed many ovarian cysts, mostly very large, one weighing 40 pounds, and I saw a hydatidiform mole. We also helped people injured on the railway. There were no passenger carriages and people traveled on top of wagons, and sometimes fell off, falling under the wheels. There was a cholera epidemic in Chengchow and many people died. We had no vaccine or IV saline. The Japanese had treated such outbreaks ruthlessly, but effectivly, by isolating the infected water supply.

I: Could you tell us something about the health conditions of the people, the health problems?

HUGHES: Well, children had bad eyes, skin diseases, malnutrition and all the diseases that go with diet. Of course there were rich and poor and no one in between; that is Nationalist China.

I: The contrast.

HUGHES: Yes.

I: Would you care to comment on how political and social conditions might have affected the health conditions in those times? First, perhaps, in Nationalist China?

HUGHES: In Nationalist China there were the rich and the poor. The poor were so short of money that they couldn't afford to get treatment for any illnesses. In Communist China it was very egalitarian and medical treatment, such as it was, was available to all. Certainly in the Communist areas we found that the more primitive peasants were afraid of western medicine, even when practiced by Chinese. They preferred to be treated by their old herbalists rather than by doctors.

I: Do you recollect something I seem to recollect, that even the peasants in the countryside were not afraid of needles because needling had been customary?

HUGHES: Yes, that's true. They were always ready to have an injection. So that part of modern medical treatment was acceptable to them.

I: You mentioned some of the kinds of surgery in Chengchow. These patients had been waiting?

HUGHES: These patients had been waiting, afraid to come.

I: And the tumors had been growing until the doctors returned and the hospital could operate.

HUGHES: Again, Chengchow was on the railway junction and there would be the amputated limb: the feet, the complete thigh, or both legs.

I: Were there other reasons besides the overcrowding for so many railroad accidents?

HUGHES: The people who hoped to travel would sit anywhere on the railway car. You never knew when the train was going to start. It would start suddenly, you'd fall off, and the wheels went over your leg or whatever. I was reading in my letters just the other day about a man found at the door of the hospital with both legs amputated by a train. He was still alive then but he died.

I: Somebody had brought him?

HUGHES: Somebody had brought him just as far as the hospital but hadn't stayed. They were afraid of getting involved either in guilt for it having happened or involved financially because he needed to be treated.

I: But they knew the hospital was there.

HUGHES: They knew the hospital was there and would treat him. Also as I mentioned earlier, there was the cholera epidemic in Chengchow while we were there. We had a large number of cholera patients in the hospital for a time. We weren't able to do a great deal for them. A hospital was opened by the state.

I: A cholera hospital?

HUGHES: A cholera hospital, oh yes.

I: With cholera mattresses?

HUGHES: I visited the cholera hospital once and was absolutely appalled because the doctors seemed to have everything equipped for them and there was absolutely nothing for the patients. They couldn't seem to get properly refined saline and they were giving them saline between the tissues of the abdomen which is not really much use at all.

I: Instead of intravenous?

HUGHES: Instead of intravenous. They couldn't get it pure enough to risk getting it into the veins. There was an American desalinization plant somewhere or other that made distilled water I suppose for drinking for the United Nations people up on the Yellow River Project. We used to go and get this distilled water, but I don't think it was distilled sufficiently for the veins.

I: So the treatment was fairly simple--getting fluids into the body. But apparently the logistics and supply was the problem. Cholera could be detected by the smell.

HUGHES: I can remember way back in my student days, I had heard of rice water stools and then I realized what they meant. The patient doesn't collapse immediately.

I: The body dehydrates.

HUGHES: It dehydrates and then suddenly the patients get kidney failure or something and die. A large number did die.

I: And there was no immunization?

HUGHES: I don't think so. The FAU were immunized.

I: Not on a massive scale.

HUGHES: We heard that when the Japanese were there they were absolutely ruthless. When there was a cholera epidemic, the wells were sealed and they just killed it by eliminating the sources. How many people died of lack of water I don't know, but by absolutely ruthless treatment they could prevent the spread. The Japanese seemed to have a better idea of public hygiene and preventing communicable diseases than the Chinese.

I: So that was when they had identified the source?

HUGHES: Yes, once they identified the source they dealt with it ruthlessly.

I: How was the work you did financed in Honan and what do you remember about the source of supplies?

HUGHES: When we were in Nationalist China we had reasonable supplies, I suppose. I really don't remember precisely where they came from. I suppose the FAU was partly responsible for their distribution because it was the distributing of medical supplies that brought the FAU to China originally. I suppose they came from the United Nations, the Red Cross, other charitable organizations and the missions. We were not desperately short of supplies. Although I remember when we went to Weiwei where I worked for quite a time, the hospital had been stripped by the Japanese.

When the Canadian missionaries came back, they were horrified and kept asking for things and expecting them to be there like fine cotton wool for eye surgery. They were quite amazed when it wasn't there. I don't know how they expected it to be after six or seven years of war. And the instruments were very, very low standard. All the better ones were gone.

I: But because the FAU had been bringing in medical supplies and because we had also done the transportation within China, in Nationalist China at least, we did have access to supplies.

HUGHES: Yes, when I first got to Chengchow I was bitten by a rabid dog. And so were several other people before the dog was caught and shot. It wasn't long before we got the vaccine from Shanghai. The rabies vaccine was supplied by the Pasteur Institute in Shanghai, I believe, and arrived within a week. Of course, once in Communist China getting supplies was entirely different.

I: Entirely different. So we're really talking about two different experiences. The supplies, the transportation, even the personnel you worked with.

HUGHES: Entirely different. In Nationalist China, the Chinese nurses and doctors were far better-educated.

I: In your experience as a nurse in hospitals in West China and in Honan and then in our Medical Team 19 in the Yenan area, can you tell us if you were treating different kinds of people? Were they mostly women, children, or were they soldiers?

HUGHES: In Nationalist China I think we treated a fairly good cross section. Probably not the very poorest, but even so the very sick ones I think would have come to us--men, women and children. Our patients were suffering from a wide range of medical and surgical conditions. But once we got to Communist China, it was almost entirely

people who were called soldiers. Sometimes one felt that they were not necessarily involved in fighting but were more connected with the Communist Party. As I think I mentioned earlier, local people often were very, very nervous at being treated by western medicine. I can remember a mother bringing her daughter of marriageable age for some treatment and she absolutely refused even to be examined. And I can remember other cases where they would be too frightened to take advice.

I: Weren't most of our patients in the International Peace Hospital in the Communist-held areas men?

HUGHES: Yes, very, very few women.

I: More outpatients would tend to be women and children.

HUGHES: Yes, we did have women and children outpatients. I can remember a boy who had been very badly burned. He was moving around with us, I think, having dressings every day.

I: Do you remember how he was burned?

HUGHES: No, I can't remember now. I remember him because he used to scream, "My grandfather" when he had his dressings. His grandfather was with him.

I: Were there fees for services in any of these different places?

HUGHES: Yes, there were graded fees in Nationalist China. But I think in Communist China it was free. We never had any indication that anyone paid anything.

I: Were you involved in training staff?

HUGHES: Yes, both in Nationalist China and in Communist China. People worked with me. I felt my function in Nationalist China, working in the operating station almost entirely, was to interpret quickly the wishes of the English-speaking doctors. The Chinese staff, on the whole I found, were extremely competent except that their knowledge of English was not always adequate to deal with the doctors who didn't speak Chinese.

I: So there were competent western-trained physicians on the one hand and competent Chinese on the other hand, and you were able to help them work together.

HUGHES: I was the bridge between them really.

I: Overall, do you think that we as medical workers had opportunity to work in prevention as much as we wanted to, or were our time and energies taken up so much in treating emergencies of the moment?

HUGHES: I wasn't personally involved in the kala-azar scheme, but that was a prime example of preventive medicine which only came to an end when the supply of drugs ran out, I believe. I think we were fully occupied in the

hospital and couldn't take much part in preventive medicine. We would have needed another group altogether and presumably one would have to have been involved with the local government.

I: On a wide scale.

HUGHES: Yes, on a wide scale.

I: Whereas treating the patients who came to the hospital meant individuals. We were a small group after all in a large population. Would you like to comment on or discuss what you might have known or observed of the Communists and the Nationalists while in Nationalist China?

HUGHES: In Nationalist China, the soldiers were the lowest form of life and they were also feared by the peasants. I always remember in Weiwei, which was on a railway that was on a small spit of land that was held by the Nationalists with the Communists all around. The cook, who didn't live in the mission compound, came in terribly distressed one day because the Kuomintang Army had been billeted in his village. They had absolutely stripped the village of everything: all the chickens, all the food, had raped, etc., etc. That was considered quite common, quite normal. They were very, very much feared. The Communists, on the other hand, always tried

to pay for what they took. Also we heard that if they captured any Nationalist casualties, they would treat them and send them back over the lines to their homes because they acted as such marvelous advertisements for the way that they treated their prisoners and the way they lived.

I: In hospitals we worked in in Honan, did we have both Communists and Nationalists?

HUGHES: No, I don't ever remember having any Communist casualties. And I don't really remember their being provision for many Nationalist soldiers. I don't know where they received their medical treatment, except officers. I remember some of them came to our hospital (perhaps in Changte is what I'm thinking of). We weren't set up as a casualty hospital, but I think we had some of the military patients.

I: Did government officials in Nationalist China know the work of the Friends Ambulance Unit all the way up to Madame Sun Yat-sen, Madame Chiang Kai-shek and others?

HUGHES: I don't know. I think people like Bronson Clark had made contacts fairly high up.

I: Yes, he did. He would have had to in order for us to do our work after all. But as far as I know, there was no direct line of supplies.

HUGHES: We certainly had no impression that we had any official recognition, only the recognition that would be acknowledged to foreigners.

I: Were you ever close to fighting in Nationalist China or in Communist China?

HUGHES: In Weiwei we were not very far from the lines, I believe. But we always felt secure with the railway and the road. In Communist China we were often quite near the fighting, but, of course, it was on a much lower key.

I: Did you have contact with missionaries anywhere along the line?

HUGHES: Yes, on one or two occasions. I did not like the Canadian missionaries I worked with in Weiwei. They had built their compound with large western-style houses for themselves with central heating. The nurses lived in huts with dirt floors. And they considered that as quite normal. And they were very, very substantially-built houses with balconies all around so that it would be cool in the summer. The missionaries homes, not the Chinese nurses' huts were the well-built ones. And we lived with the missionaries.

I: We lived quite well?

HUGHES: Yes, I think our food was quite good.

I: We were living in this kind of housing?

HUGHES: Oh yes, though several people shared a room and most of the original furniture had been removed during the Japanese war.

I: As long as we were working there we lived in this western-style housing?

HUGHES: Yes, and we objected very strongly. After all, many of the nurses were very highly qualified people and there they were expected to live in these huts with dirt floors. It seemed ridiculous. Not a Christian attitude at all.

I: After working a year or a year and a half in Honan, how does it happen that you went to be a member of Medical Team 19 in the International Peace Hospital at Yenan?

HUGHES: Well, Bronson Clark and Lady Cripps were involved in trying to arrange that medical supplies should go into Communist-held parts of China as well as the Nationalist-held parts. UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association) supplies were meant to reach all people regardless of their political standing. It was arranged that medical supplies should be sent in only if disinterested personnel went in with them. They wanted nurses and doctors. I was available and was chosen as one of the nurses to be a member of the team that should accompany these supplies. My husband was also part of this team.

I: Were lots of people interested in going?

HUGHES: I think many people in the FAU would like to have gone but couldn't only because many of them had been in the Friends Ambulance Unit for a long time and were at the end of the time that they said they would give to working in the FAU. There were not a great many people who had a suitable length of stay in China to make it possible for them to go. Or the proper qualifications.

I: How about interest?

HUGHES: Everyone was interested.

I: And people outside the Friends Ambulance Unit?

HUGHES: I don't remember meeting people outside. I think many of them would not have been interested. I think that's rather disgusting.

Can I go back a bit to the missionaries? It seemed strange that the Protestant missionaries used to talk about France, Switzerland, Sweden, or England as "home," while the Catholic missionaries talked about China as "home" which gave quite a different attitude. I felt that even though the Catholics were so very heavily criticized for some of their methods and for their basic religion, if you like, nevertheless they got much, much closer to

the people because they looked upon themselves as Chinese. They thought in terms of permanence and being part of the surroundings while the other missionaries held themselves aloof. You felt these Protestant missionaries considered themselves right and the others wrong; they were superior and the Chinese were inferior. There were one or two missions that I went to where that didn't apply. There was one at Tientsin where we crossed the frontier where there was a marvelous spirit.

I: What foreigners, aside from those who were in mission work, did you come in touch with?

HUGHES: In Chengchow there were some UNRRA doctors. There was a famous New Zealand thyroid specialist who had been working for UNRRA. He had been told he could come to China and have a 500-bed hospital. He was a specialist in thyroids and I saw him do one thyroidectomy which was an absolute miracle. But, of course, it was ridiculous to have promised him anything like that because nothing like a 500-bed hospital existed in China, especially just after the war. I think he was very disillusioned. He was ready and willing to give his services but he was so absolutely under-used.

I can remember an incident where somebody needed their foot amputated. The surgeon was just about to start when his train was due to leave and he had to leave the patient on the table. This specialist, whose name was Wells (I can't remember his full name) came to take over. He hadn't amputated a limb since his student days. While he'd done a thyroidectomy in 15 minutes flat, it took him about an hour to amputate a leg. So there were a certain number of UNRRA people I met in Chengchow.

There were a certain number of foreigners with Oliver Todd out on the Yellow River. Todd was an American engineer working for UNRRA and responsible for diverting the Yellow River back to its pre-1937 course. I went out to the site once and it was a tremendous undertaking, employing many hundreds of people, both local labor and specialists of many nationalities.

I: "Todd almighty?"

HUGHES: Yes.

I: I met him a few years ago, just before he died at his home in Palto Alto, California, and had a good talk with him.

HUGHES: We went back to the Yellow River when I was in China in '74 and were told all about damming the Yellow River, but Todd was never mentioned. It was all the Chinese Communists that had done it.

I: He gave many years. Over a period of 20 years.

HUGHES: It was just ignored. I'm afraid the Communists do tend to remember what they want to remember.

I: Let's leave Honan and travel north. Can I ask you what impressed you most about this new experience, shall we call it the Yenan area?

HUGHES: It was more primitive than any area I had ever visited and more barren than anything except pure desert. But there was a marvelous feeling of surging forward, of pulling together and overcoming difficulties. Of course, there were two classes in Yenan--the Communists and the local peasants. The party members and the people interested in the party outnumbered the indigenous population in the Yenan area.

I: You're talking about the valley of Yenan itself.

HUGHES: Yes. It was incredibly primitive and everyone lived at a very low standard. The town had been bombed, so accomodations were very crowded. There were very few shops. We were taken to see the university which was caves. People used to carry around a brick to sit on while they had their lectures. The threat from the Nationalists was great at that time so that many, many people who had been living in Yenan had already been evacuated.

The situation was very unstable for the months we were there, from December to March. Most of the patients had been evacuated from the hospital. The hospital was in a side valley about two or three miles from the main part of the town. The countryside was something entirely new to us. I believe it covers many square miles in that area, the loess hills and very, very few trees. All the mountains are the same height and all of soft fertile soil, very, very soft rock which erodes very easily.

I: With both wind and water as I recall.

HUGHES: With both wind and water. They have tremendous rainstorms in the summer and wind in the autumn, I think. We were told that it had been wooded at some time, but the Mongolians had swept down from the north (I thought about 150 years or more previously) and cut all the trees down.

I: I don't remember windstorms but I do remember the dust was blowing much of the time.

HUGHES: Yes. It was very, very dry. The weather was very cold and dry in the winter and beautiful with a lovely crisp atmosphere. It was very, very hot in the summer and then, just occasionally, rain. I think August was the month for the terrific rainstorms. The soil was fertile only if irrigated.

I: You mentioned, Elizabeth, that the Yenan area had a spirit about it--a getting ahead, forward-looking spirit. What do you think are the ingredients which made up this atmosphere so different from the Honan area? I felt it, too, very much as you describe it.

HUGHES: I think it was the nucleus of the people who had gotten to Yenan under such enormous difficulties to preserve the ideals and the sharing they felt was so important.

I: This has been stylized, so to speak, in the story of the Long March?

HUGHES: Yes.

I: The actual physical and other difficulties in getting to Yenan?

HUGHES: Yes. The spirit that drove people to continue the Long March and preserve their lives in order to preserve their ideals. It got them to Yenan and got a viable community living in these very, very primitive conditions where the soil is so eroded, the crops so minute and the yield from the land is so small.

I: There must have been a goal.

HUGHES: Yes, there was a goal. Of course, they fought both the Kuomintang and the Japanese through the war with such materials and methods as were available.

I: This was the motivating force during the war.

HUGHES: During the war. Of course after that, they wanted to bring Communism to the people, bring equality to the people and a fair life and a good life for everyone.

I: So that Yenan itself was the central nucleus as an educational center, so to speak, with workers going out farther and farther all the time?

HUGHES: Yes. You felt it was the place where the cadres were trained and indoctrinated in order to educate other people. You also felt it was a reservoir for the time when the fighting would be over and they would be able to move into the whole of China. You felt they were quite confident that one day they would.

I: You were a part of Medical Unit 19 from November, 1946?

HUGHES: December.

I: December, 1946, three months before I arrived. What was your contact with the leadership of the Yenan government?

HUGHES: We were welcomed, we were feted; we had very, very interesting conversations with very high people, including Chou En-lai, and we attended a dinner with Mao Tse-tung.

I: Did you have formal conversations and appointments?

HUGHES: Yes, and with other people whose names I now can't remember.

I: Could you describe the content of these conversations?

HUGHES: My own political knowledge was insufficient to make these conversations of any great significance. Chou En-lai's English was not easy to understand.

I: Were they interested in the Friends Ambulance Unit and work and motives?

HUGHES: Yes. I can't ever remember having conversations about actual pacifism, but the altruistic idea of the FAU, wanting to help people that were less fortunate than themselves, was very interesting to them. In fact, one of the doctors who trained in a Christian mission said that we were acting out the true Christian tradition.

I: Were you given time with the government leadership for them to tell you about their political and military approach to the problems?

HUGHES: Yes, all the time we were there. Originally with people of some importance, and latterly our interpreters were obviously all instructed to pass on certain information to us, although we were not flooded or oppressed with too much information. But nevertheless, it was obviously our interpreters' job to see that we were kept up to date with developments and ideas and ideals. They seldom mentioned anything not directly connected with China, but they passed on the news of Gandhis' assassination.

I: So your unit was assigned a certain number of interpreters?

HUGHES: Yes, we had two interpreters originally and latterly we always had one.

I: Did you feel the interpreters learned to know you on a personal basis and were you able to learn to know them and their families?

HUGHES: Pretty well.

I: You spent a lot of time together?

HUGHES: A good deal of time, yes. In all sorts of circumstances.

I: Was Mr. Li Hsing Pei the original interpreter?

HUGHES: Yes. Mr. Chiang was with us until after you left.

I: In the Yenan area, what was the feeling about Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang at that time? Now we have to remember we are talking about late 1946 and all of 1947 and part of 1948, right?

HUGHES: Well, nothing good could be said of Chiang Kai-shek and the Americans. In fact, they were continually derided and the term "running dog" was about as bad a term as they could use. It was continually applied to Chiang Kai-shek and the Americans as well. It was presumed that they were wrong and the Communists would eventually overcome them.

I: Talking and discussing with the Chinese Communists, did you learn their views of the U. S. A. government policy or people?

HUGHES: They would continue to say it's the government, not the common people.

I: And England?

HUGHES: They didn't know very much about England, Canada, or New Zealand.

I: Do you feel they knew as much about the U. S. A. as any other country?

HUGHES: More. They talked of the USA, but I don't know whether it was real knowledge or little snippets that you pick up. It was more propaganda than anything else. It is difficult to say. I suppose they would have more contact with Americans.

I: Some of the students asked me questions about President Lincoln, for instance. They must have been reading USA history. Do you remember specific things people mentioned about the future of China at that time? There had been what--10 years of war? Certainly the future must have been in the minds of the leaders.

HUGHES: Yes, but I don't remember the masses discussing that. I had the impression that they thought the immediate future was to establish a stable government as a whole country.

I: It was military then?

HUGHES: Yes. And, of course, there was land reform already.

I: Going on at the same time?

HUGHES: Yes, yes because we heard that our little hsiao-kwei (helper) had been given land in his own home province while we were there. Perhaps that was after you had gone. (I can't remember if it was Mao or Chou.) He was told that he'd been given some land back where his parents lived. Well, his parents had been given this land because of the service he had given the Party. I

am sure that's how it was. That was the sort of thing that we had the feeling that was going on. As soon as the Communists had established themselves in our area, they redistributed the land--usually giving land to individual peasants. I think collective farms came later.

TAPE ONE - SIDE TWO

I: You say the landlords were eliminated?

HUGHES: Yes. I am afraid many times they were treated unjustifiably cruelly. Even where we were, I know two men were hung up by their thumbs all day. They were poor, decrepit, defenseless-looking creatures that really you don't think would have been the terrible, wicked, oppressive landlords. Also, in the area where we were, somebody was stoned to death. Officially, the people's courts were not allowed to issue the death sentence. But in this case, it was actually carried out on someone who was said to have been a spy.

I feel that in many ways you must forgive them because they had so few emotional outlets, so few recreations. These emotions built up and produced tensions, and so on. If they can't get them out in one way, they will find another. Although it is obviously extremely regrettable that there should be such cruelty and ruthlessness, you can in a way forgive it.

I: I understand that the resentments had been accumulated over generations.

HUGHES: Yes. And in a way possibly the vindictiveness was vicarious. At least they felt anger against someone that they couldn't reach, but these people they could reach and so they were eliminated in this way.

I: Do you think that the changes such as the agrarian changes could have been brought about without the violence, that social changes could have been brought about without the military warfare?

HUGHES: You would hope so. Idealistically it could be. But I suppose it would be in a very much longer process. And also, possibly, because of the power of the United States and the United States' dread of the word "Communism," there might have been some intervention. The United States would send them money and so on to prevent the advance of Communism.

I: Let's go on to another topic if we may unless there is anything you would like to add.

HUGHES: I want to say that I am not wholeheartedly behind Communism as a doctrine in the way it is carried out anywhere in the world. I am very much in favor of the communism preached by the early Christian church which so far has never been able to be put fully into

practice. Somebody always seems to come up on top and there are always people who are suppresssed. This happens once it gets beyond the very, very smallest community.

I: And now, another kind of question: can you tell us about situations in China in the work of the FAU, in your personal experience, when there were strains or clashes of any kind that made the work more difficult?

HUGHES: I think that we must have been very fortunate because I don't remember any situations that really interfered with the flow of life in our work. It was pretty remarkable.

I: In our own small seven-member medical team in the Yenan area, how do you think it was possible for us to continue to carry on the work that we had set out to do under the very difficult circumstance? For instance, we had three meals a day. How was that possible for us to have three meals a day and a cook of our own when the hospital staff had two meals a day, as I recall?

HUGHES: Yes. I think it made work more difficult. I don't remember any resentment. Of course, I was in a special position because I was pregnant and then had the baby and so was a special case. Also, I feel the psychological effect of pregnancy made me unaware of difficulties and I really lived in a dream world possibly.

I do remember very little resentment. It did make some schedules very difficult to keep, but I don't remember any kind of resentment.

I: No. I don't remember that that posed problems. Did you have everything you needed to care for the baby? How long were you in the Yenan area after the baby was born?

HUGHES: When I became pregnant, we thought we would be staying in Yenan and that our work would be mainly teaching, so that I would be able to carry on with hardly any interruption. Conditions in Yenan were rather primitive, but not squalid, and there were two doctors and another nurse (you, Margaret) in our party.

Unfortunately, the military situation changed, and it became necessary for our group to retreat into the even more primitive interior. Our group, as foreigners, became an embarrassing responsibility, while a pregnant English woman must have been a real headache for the authorities. Neverthless, I certainly was not made to feel that I was a nuisance nor were the other members made to feel unwanted. For instance, as we got further and further into the primitive villages, there was less and less work for the mechanics--there simply was not anything mechanical.

Before we became isolated from the outside world, I acquired from the American Red Cross a basic layette (this meant a set of clothes, nappies, etc., needed by a new baby) and a few tins of powdered milk.

Fortunately, I was able to feed my baby, because the Communists moved some of the only milk cows in the area, bred at an experimental farm in Yenan, to the village where we were. The baby was born on November 15th, and I had several weeks off work. At that time of year, however, there was little to do. Snow fell the night the baby was born. From then till March there was always snow lying on the hills and out of the sun.

When spring came, we had been in China two and a half years, six months longer than we had said we would stay. Arrangements were made for us to get back to the coast. This took months rather than weeks. In the early stages the baby was carried in a cradle strapped to the side of a mule; or, on a few days, when the road was very rugged, the cradle was carried on a pole by two strong lads.

The main part of the journey was made in a truck with an American representative of UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) and an interpreter. The farther east we traveled, the less helpful the local people became. Nearer the big cities people had had more experience of domination by foreigners.

Also they were subjected to more propaganda directed against foreigners, especially Americans, in newspapers, posters and by radio. This propaganda hardly touched the border regions--and anyway we were known there.

The baby was still breast fed at this time and was also taking things like lotus root gruel and liver. He liked traveling along, but did not like sleeping in proper houses after the caves of the Border Regions. Difficulties traveling were usually due to the poor condition of the roads. Though there was obviously some tension when we crossed the "lines" back into Nationalist China, everything went so smoothly I can't recall now how or when we crossed over.

I: As a medical team, how was it that responsibilities were assigned or chosen?

HUGHES: As far as I remember, we had Quaker-type meetings. We had a leader and decisions somehow came into place. They came out of the meetings. We had a leader who was also spokesman and a representative to represent us to higher authority. But he acted as definitely our elected representative, not a dominating leader.

I: So that our leader helped facilitate administrative decisions within our group. But the group itself, then, was guided in a sense by the administrative decisions in the hospital?

HUGHES: Entirely, entirely. Yes, we were not a free agent in Communist China. The political and military situation, let alone the situation of food and so on, was quite beyond our control. It was only fair to the authorities who were ultimately responsible for us that we acted entirely under their guidance.

I: And they felt and they acted very responsibly for our welfare.

HUGHES: For the most part. In fact, in a way I felt quite guilty because they were so afraid that something might happen to us. I felt that we often put them to a great deal of trouble, especially with the baby.

I: I felt that we were given special treatment as guests at all times.

HUGHES: Yes, certainly. At all times, yes.

I: What would you consider were the greatest difficulties of carrying out nursing work in the border region?

HUGHES: The extremely primitive conditions made nursing very difficult. One thinks of nursing as washing patients and giving them bed pans. Often we had neither. You wonder what you are left with. We were often extremely short of drugs. You couldn't get at the patients properly because they had to be nursed in such awkward places.

And water in some of the villages we lived had to be carried several miles. Fuel to heat water was at a premium. Special food was quite unattainable and dressings had to be reused in a way entirely unhygenic. So really it was a question of adapting, going back to first principles and deciding what was essential and what could go by the board. We were down absolutely to bare essentials.

I: Would you expand more on the adapting that had to be done?

HUGHES: I worked in the operation theatre not in the wards. The surgeons managed without any form of artificial light. Sometimes the cave-like room used for surgery would have glass windows, but sometimes only oiled paper would be available. A white bedsheet would be suspended high over the operating area to prevent dirt falling and to reflect a little light, while another sheet was hung up opposite the window to reflect light. A large grain chest would form the operating table. This could not be raised or lowered, let alone tilted.

There were no cylindered gasses such as oxygen, carbon dioxide, etc. We had a little ethyl chloride, chloroform and ether for "rag and bottle" anesthesia, but local or spinal anesthetics were used if possible. We had a fair supply of procaine and some IV anesthetics such as Pentothal. There was no blood bank and very little IV saline. Penicillin was in very short supply.

Ligatures put out for one operation but not used or obviously contaminated would be used for another operation. Dressings and gloves would be washed, patched, and resterilized. Sterilization of instruments was by boiling in water or by immersion in spirit or possibly Lysol. Needles of all types had to be sharpened and reused many times. Dressings, towels, gowns, etc., were sometimes sterilized in a large old-fashioned steam autoclave, but sometimes had to be baked or steamed in an adapted domestic stove.

Surgeons had to restrict their surgery according to the general conditions of the patients and the drugs and instruments available. Patients were usually not seen for several days after they were injured, so infection and bone necrosis was common. The surgeons dare not open up wounds too much for fear of loss of blood or shock which they were unable to treat.

I: Was nursing looked at differently from the Chinese viewpoint than we looked at it?

HUGHES: Nursing was considered only as a way to become a doctor and anyone who had been nursing for more than three years was considered a doctor. On the whole, medical work was considered rather inferior to some other work, although we had some very dedicated, intelligent, and helpful people among nurses. Often when I was introduced to anyone, they would introduce me as a nurse. Then they would say, "Well, how long has she been a nurse?" It would be perhaps five to seven years, you see. They would say, "Oh, well you must be a doctor now." But, of course, the attitude is quite different from the West.

I: And so the hsiao-kwei, the boys who did errands and started out helping in the hospital, might eventually become helpers, workers, nurses, and so on?

HUGHES: Li-bing has never had formal medical education. She was trained in a mission hospital as a nurse. She admitted this when we were there in '74. She was trained as a nurse in an American mission hospital, I think. Then she was taken under the wing of people like Dr. Chou, who were foreign-trained doctors. Now she is the head of the cancer institute and comes as their representative to European delegations, but she has still had no formal medical education, except by apprenticeship. We were told that even today a doctor is trained in, I think, four years.

I: Yes. The training has been cut down especially since the Cultural Revolution.

We've talked about the difficulties in health care and medical practice in the Border Region. In this case it was the Shen-kan-ning Border Region. What about satisfactions? What would you consider the greatest satisfactions in your work?

HUGHES: The one case that really stands out was the man we called the "chinless wonder." He was an officer on the Long March and had had his jaw very badly damaged. He came to us after the wounds had completely healed, but he was left with a shattered jaw and a mouth that was permanently an open "O" about an inch and a half across. Consequently, he couldn't eat normal food; he couldn't swallow in a normal manner. He had to be tube-fed. He had become extremely thin and emaciated and couldn't do the useful work that he obviously was capable of doing.

Our New Zealand doctor was able to raise a pedicle on his chest and by a series of operations, build him up a new lower lip. All this was done over a long period of time while we were constantly on the move. I can remember him having to travel many miles all day with this pedicle attaching his chin to his chest. He had his own horse. But eventually he came and had a meal

with us eating in a normal fashion. My husband was able to X-ray him. He left us and he was going somewhere to see a dentist who was going to make him a lower plate. It must have been after you left. We have a photograph of him somewhere with his signature on it.

I: Yes. He had photographs taken and presented us each with one after final surgical procedure.

HUGHES: I was pleased that sewing cotton was used from my small sewing kit for the stitches. I am afraid that was my largest contribution. But also we saved the life of another man who had been shot in the throat. And although the wound was not fatal at the time, his wound was not so severe, but gradually there was pressure on the nerves on the larynx and he had a complete occlusion of the larynx at one point. We had to do an emergency tracheotomy. He survived.

I: It's the patients in the crisis, the emergency type of work that gave you satisfaction.

HUGHES: Oh, yes. The times when you feel if we hadn't been there, the outcome would have been quite different. I'm afraid in many ways we did not have the impact we should have. For instance, if we had known the language,

or if it hadn't been a war situation and we had been more settled in Yenan as we imagined we would be when we first went there.

I: Have we learned any reaction to our medical team and its work? Do we know what the impression of our work was? We had some thank-you letters I believe.

HUGHES: Yes, and when we left they went to enormous trouble to make us a marvelous banner thanking us for our work there.

I: The famous banner that Bronson Clark then took back to China in 1971?

HUGHES: Yes.

I: We have talked about some emergencies, about some patients, about some of the hospital work. I don't know whether you want to go into any more detail or not but let me just list a few possibilities: Do you have any recollections of experiences of setting broken bones, blood transfusions, the septic cases, the gunshot wounds?

HUGHES: Of course, the great difficulty is transport. Most of the war casualties, which is what we treated mainly, were several days in coming to us. Consequently, many things were already infected before we got them, making things very, very much more difficult. In fact,

I can remember another case, a time when we had an influx of patients and the wounds were very, very slight. But they all had severe iodine burns because the first aid people were so badly trained that they had slapped on iodine and put dressings over it. Of course, they had all got iodine burns and tiny little wounds underneath.

The sepsis and the necrosis that followed was far more serious. We had great, great difficulty with compound fractures of the femur particularly. No X-ray to see where you were, terrible infections. The plaster we had to use was of very inferior quality. The bandages in which the plaster was laid were very heavy and thick, so the plasters were tremendously heavy. And, of course, very, very limited antibiotics, so these compound fractures were extremely difficult to deal with. If we only could have gotten them to the hospital sooner, at least we probably wouldn't have had the infection.

Blood transfusions? The Chinese usually had a very low protein, low iron diet. Hemoglobin was very low and they have a very great reverence for blood. Actually most Chinese can't spare to lose blood or to give it. When we Europeans gave or were allowed to

give blood, the Chinese were tremendously impressed and fantastically grateful. They gave us donations of money and eggs and chickens so that we could build up our strength while to most of us to give a pint of blood every month or two months would mean nothing. Of course, we had no intravenous saline, things like that.

Also those surgeons carried on operations without proper lighting and no adjustable tables and very limited instruments and very limited sutures. It was quite fantastic. When you think of the fuss a surgeon makes at home if the light isn't just right or the table isn't just the right height or the patient at just the right tilt. Of course, the anesthetics were very elementary, usually spinals.

I: What elements of traditional Chinese medicine did you come across in China? I'm thinking of needling, cupping, etc.

HUGHES: You see, I had just come from Europe. European refugees in Greece were still using cupping with modern doctors. In fact, when I trained, we were taught about cupping although I never saw it used in England.

I: Did you see it in China?

HUGHES: I think so, yes.

I: We saw the results many times.

HUGHES: Sometimes--yes, of course--sometimes badly done or overdone. I don't remember seeing acupuncture, but I do remember seeing charms written on the skin.

I: Tattooed?

HUGHES: I don't think so, just painted on, I think. Also other various concoctions. You'd say "What on earth is the matter with him?" and he would have been painted with something or other. I can't remember the ingredients.

I: So that there must have been traditional healers nearby.

HUGHES: There were traditional healers. Yes. It may be merely someone in the village who may have a little bit of knowledge that was passed down. They must have had their own midwives.

I: They must have because the women didn't come to us for delivery. What was the background of Chinese medical personnel you worked with? You spoke of one particular case. What about the nurses who came to our hospital or the student nurses--what kind of background?

HUGHES: They came from all walks of life. Some of them were local people, but most of them had come from other parts of China to join the Communists and do whatever was required of them. There was a student who came in, a girl with glasses. You have her photograph.

I: Yes, Wu Ming Jin.

HUGHES: She came from a well-to-do educated family, didn't she? The majority of them, though, were not as well-educated as that.

I: She had had training as a nurse.

HUGHES: Yes. I can remember when we had no patients at one time starting English classes and thinking of a good way to teach them numbers, wanting to teach them the time. This was in Yenan before we started off on the move. And they didn't even know how to tell the time in Chinese. So the standards were, on the whole, very low.

I: People may have come from villages where there may not have been a clock.

HUGHES: Yes, that's right. And they had never seen running water. You would explain about a tap and they never would have seen it. Thermometers got broken at a phenomenal rate because they were just not used to handling delicate things. Nevertheless, once they tried, they were extremely deft. I've never seen such wonderful eye surgeons as the Chinese.

I: I'd like to talk about the Los Angeles Nursery. Did you ever visit the Los Angeles Nursery or hear about it?

HUGHES: I heard about it, but I didn't visit the one there, although I've seen them on my later visit, that type of nursery. Of course, we knew that important members of the hospital staff had children being cared for in such nurseries.

I: Was Los Angeles the name of one nursery: Was it the model nursery or was it the official nursery? I think that money had been donated through Madame Sun Yat-sen's China Welfare Fund from friends in Los Angeles.

HUGHES: I know nothing about it.

I: What did you do for rest and relaxation in China?

HUGHES: In the border regions, lighting is a great problem in the evenings. We used to play cards, a simple game called "Slippery Lady." We had a few novels and other books that we used to read aloud because the light was so bad that it was difficult enough to get light for more than one to see. My husband, particularly, used to sleep a phenomenal amount of time.

I: I remember that I did, too. Because there were long nights and it was quiet and it was conducive to a long hibernation.

HUGHES: In the summer we used to go for walks. But we had to tell the authorities where we were going. They were always rather nervous of our well-being, I think, more than we would see things that we shouldn't.

I: Did they always send someone along?

HUGHES: Yes, I think so. They didn't like us going on our own at all. At one time Doug was told not to go up a hill with his camera because he might be signalling with the lens to Kuomintang airplanes, which really seems a little bit unlikely. It's rather like some of the English scares, you know, that every nun was a parachutist.

I: During this time of civil war when we were behind the lines, was there any news of efforts at negotiation, of stopping the civil war?

HUGHES: We understood that there were representatives of the Peace Team in Yenan when we got there. If it's not libelous, I considered them extremely low-caliber people. One felt that if that was the type of effort that was being made, it was pretty well useless. We didn't hear of any further efforts being made after that because the peace teams finished the negotiations the winter we left Yenan. I'm not sure. That may not be correct.

I: Yes, I think that is correct. I think that about the time we left Yenan, Marshall had left. What was the situation when you left China? What did you expect to happen in China after you left?

HUGHES: It seemed to be inevitable that the Communists would gain control of the country. When we left Shanghai, Peking was still in the hands of the Nationalists and there was tremendous inflation. While we were on the way home, we heard that Chiang Kai-shek had called in all the gold. He'd made a new Yuan, I think. But the money didn't hold. Consequently, the people who stayed behind were made penniless and nothing was preventing the advance of the Communists.

I: So that the economic situation suggested the takeover by the Communists?

HUGHES: Yes, it indicated that it would be inevitable. Both the military situation and the economic situation made it seem that it was quite inevitable and people were more or less accepting, I think, that it was inevitable.

I: After leaving China did you receive criticism for having worked behind the Communist lines?

HUGHES: Only from a few rather stuffy people and a few people with whom I was not able to talk. Once I talked to those who didn't understand the situation as it really was, I had very little criticism.

I: So it was lack of understanding of the realities?

HUGHES: Yes, a lack of understanding because you see Chiang Kai-shek was thought of as a good Methodist and very little was known of what his regime was really like.

I: What would you like to have done differently, Elizabeth?

HUGHES: If I had known I was going to be there for three years rather than two, I would have made a great deal more effort to learn the language. But I must say that I was trying to learn Serbo-Croatian, which is a very, very difficult language, when I was in the Middle East; and I tried to learn Greek, which is also very difficult. I've learned a lot of very bad Italian and I spoke German, but I never had a chance to use it. So it was a bit frustrating.

Chinese seemed to be such an impossible language. We had one or two lessons before we went to China, but with such an obscure romanization that it really made it worse than not having any at all. Of course, there was a great dearth of good teachers and Chinese is not a language that is easy to learn without a good teacher. It's quite easy to speak very bad Chinese, isn't it? But very difficult to speak good Chinese.

I: It takes a lot of time and a lot of practice. And continuity.

HUGHES: Yes, it depends on whether you have a gift for language or not. I was a bit saturated with trying to learn languages by the time I got to China.

I: How have those years in China influenced the rest of your life?

HUGHES: It has made me ask myself over and over again "how much is enough." There we were, living quite contentedly with nothing to drink but hot water and very little soap. I used to have no pegs for the baby's clothes. I used to put them on the line with safety pins and that was the only thing that was ever stolen in Communist China. I remember seeing a villager very shame-facedly walking past me with a safety pin pinned to her jacket as a brooch! Yes, you managed with the minimum: cloth shoes, padded cotton clothes in the winter to keep you warm, these tiny little oil lamps, no electricity or radio, washing the baby's nappies in the running stream.

I: And the cold running stream. Can you tell me about those oil lamps?

HUGHES: They were like the little ones you have in Bible stories. Just a little dish, and a little tiny wick of raw cotton twisted into a wick, dipped in the oil which was often rapeseed oil, wasn't it?

I: Or peanut.

HUGHES: Peanut oil you could eat, so usually it was the cheapest oil you could get. If you left the lamps on the table, the rats came and drank the oil at night. I know we were given a bag of peanuts and we had to hang those up from a hook in the ceiling to prevent the rats coming in at night to take them.

I: As far as you know, did the Friends Ambulance Unit, which later became the Friends Service Unit, try to influence foreign countries in their attitude toward China?

HUGHES: A certain number of pamphlets and lectures and so on were circulated. For instance, when we were on the way home from China we were sent a telegram, while we were staying in Paris where we had intended to stay a week, telling us to come home sooner because the BBC was interested in our doings. They felt that it was worthwhile that we shouldn't miss this opportunity for passing on our experiences. It was limited but there was a certain amount. Of course, you've got to remember that in England (which is what I'm talking about) all the resources after the war were extremely limited for many years.

I: What exactly did you do for the BBC and what was the outcome?

HUGHES: As members of the FAU/FSU, Eric and I took part in a radio magazine programme called "In Town Tonight," which went out from London five days a week in the early evening--a very popular programme. We also appeared in a TV magazine programme that went out "live." I also participated in a BBC radio programme for schools, talking about the leaders of China. We recorded a talk for the Overseas Department of the BBC and I gave a talk "live" in "Womens' Hour," a radio programme still going strong.

I can remember that I attended a meeting in the House of Commons before the Communists had actually taken over the country. I can remember that I was asked my opinions. And I said that I thought that having lived in those very, very primitive conditions for so long the impact of the large towns on the cadres, when they came into the big towns in the more sophisticated areas, would be so terrific. It would be very difficult for them to maintain the high ideals and translate their ideals into the practical conditions of an urban society as opposed to a rural society.

I: Do you think that this is what has actually happened?

HUGHES: Well, no. I was amazed that things went as smoothly as they did. Yenan must have been particularly backward and there must have been many people in other areas who had been prepared to come into the big urban

areas in the big towns. That's my feeling because things seemed to go much more smoothly than I had thought would be possible.

I: How were you able to attend the meeting at the House of Commons?

HUGHES: The House of Commons contains many rooms and meeting halls as well as the place the MPs sit and actually make laws, etc. This is called the "Chamber of the House of Commons." The meeting I attended, with other members of the FAU China Convoy, was in one of the meeting halls, and I think it may have been open to the general public.

I: Who are the most memorable Chinese you remember from that experience?

HUGHES: Li-bing stands out very, very much because she had a wonderful personality and, of course, she has gone on from strength to strength. Lee Hsing Pei was a very interesting person and he tried so very hard. He was our interpreter who walked around with Gray's Anatomy under his arm trying to learn it by heart. The hospital manager, he was Mr. Lee, wasn't he?

I: I don't remember the hospital manager.

HUGHES: Yes, he had a strong personality and always tried to tell us what was happening and why.

I: What about the most memorable foreigners you met in China?

HUGHES: Ma-Hai-teh (George Hatem) we remember very well. In fact, I think that he is the only one I could name. But there was that pomologist we had spoken of.

I: The one in the FAU?

HUGHES: No, he wasn't in the FAU. Another one. There was an agronomist who had worked on the experimental farm in Yenan. He was a Communist and had come there for life. He was a young man.

I: Sid Angst, Bill Hinton worked together. That's just a guess. Elizabeth, I am sure we could think of more. The longer we are together and the more chance we have to reminisce, we could think of more things to discuss. I'd like to ask what may be the most important questions now. How do you think that we Medical Team 19 members can at this stage or this perspective, 30 years later, use the experience we had? Of what value can it be to others? We're enjoying being together; we're getting re-acquainted; we're doing fun things together, but how about this unique experience and what can we put together to be of value to others?

HUGHES: I think that it is very difficult, unfortunately, to do anything except on a personal level. Because like so many other Communists, everything that they touch has to be shown to be connected with their political ideals. And nothing can be taken on a person-to-person, only personal, level. As our visit there was not politically motivated, we do not want any political angle attached to it in any way. Consequently, it would be very, very difficult to accept wide publicity without accepting, at the same time, political implications that we would not be prepared to underwrite. Consequently, in a way, wonderful experiences can't be recognized for what they are. But on the personal level we can perhaps promote better understanding.

I: How do you think we can promote better understanding on the personal level at this stage? All of us have been busy with our families for 25, almost 30 years now. It's only now that we may have the time to do anything with the pictures. Some are rare photos of a time and an era which is gone forever, so they have historical value. Are you saying that a personal story that any of us might want to relate is the only way we can use this experience now in trying to describe the beginnings of one stage of the changes which have come about in China?

HUGHES: Yes. As I say, if we could find an outlet that didn't have too many political overtones, it would be worthwhile. But it's very difficult to keep things in perspective.

I: How about photographs, how can we use that?

HUGHES: I saw a case where photographs from the hospital, when we were on the move, were used in America to illustrate articles and were twisted around so that they were used in a most derogatory manner. So you have to be extremely careful that texts and so on are correctly used. Unfortunately, unless you can follow through the use of the material very, very carefully, often the wrong emphasis is put upon it.

I: At present, research is becoming possible on that period 25 or 30 years ago when we were in China. Up to now government documents have been classified. People who are studying history and political science of those times are now looking and searching for research material, and it's hoped that some of our records might be available to some of these people which would not be just publicity but actual historical research. Even then, I think your cautions are very wise and I appreciate them.

I: Do you have anything you'd like to add to the last few minutes of tape? I've run out of questions at the moment, but please feel free to add anything at this point.

HUGHES: I think of all the different nationalities that I've worked with during the war and directly after the war, that the Chinese have the most charm and sense of humor and strength of purpose and are really wonderful people, wonderful personalities. No country has changed so radically as China. Although, for instance, in Egypt there's a new middle class; the poor are not so poor and the rich not so rich. This is far more evident in China.

Nevertheless, in spite of the wonderful things that have happened there, there is a loss of freedom. The choice of jobs and so on, the choice of where you go, where you live, how you live, is very limited. Although you feel that the good that has come out of the revolution outweighs the bad, nevertheless you can't turn a blind eye to the things you feel are not right and not perfect. No society yet is perfect, but it is very difficult to get all these wonderful improvements without somebody being pushed to the wall.

I: You were in China in the late 40s and then again in 1974. If you were to go back in another 20 or 25 years what might you expect?

HUGHES: I hope I shall see more prosperity, a higher standard of living for everyone. And I expect to see too, more freedom of movement and choice of jobs, better housing, more consumer goods. I hope that the wonderful feeling that was almost tangible when we were there, of working together for the common good, can be maintained. If that can be maintained, I feel that China will go forward to be the most splendid civilized country. On the other hand, of course, if war comes, as seems possible, everything will be undone and I feel that it has all been in vain.

I: I want to thank you, Elizabeth, for this interview.